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GORMAN'S LEADERSHIP

As an exponent of democratic principles as set forth in the platforms adopted at Chicago and Kansas City, The Commoner chronicles with regret what may fairly be considered the most important victory thus far scored by the reactionary element in the democratic party, namely, the selection of Mr. Gorman as democratic leader in the senate.

The senator from Maryland is a man of great force and extended legislative experience. Probably no other man in Washington is so well acquainted with public men and parliamentary procedure. Besides this, he is a man of exemplary personal habits, of indefatigable industry and perfect self-control. In other words, he has most of the qualifications considered necessary for leadership and if his sympathies were only with the people he would be an admirable man to speak for the democrats in the senate, but he fails at the crucial point. His record shows that he is too close to the corporations and organized wealth to be commander in chief of the democratic forces in the most influential branch of the national legislature.

There is not a single reform for which Mr. Gorman stands, nor is there a single remedial measure which can be said to have his earnest and hearty support. When the Wilson tariff bill was before the senate he was one of the senators who, by holding the balance of power, forced the emasculation of the bill in the interest of the manufacturers. In the fight for the repeal of the Sherman law he acted with the republicans and is with them still on all phases of the money question. He has never said or done anything to indicate that he desires positive and effective anti-trust legislation. On the contrary, his environment is such as to make it certain that his great influence will be used to stifle rather than promote legislation aimed at the trusts.

The Chicago Chronicle of last Friday contained a dispatch from Washington stating that J. Pierpont Morgan visited the capital the day before and "saw a number of senators, including Messrs. Aldrich, Hanna and Gorman." It does the party infinite harm to have as its leader in the senate a man on intimate terms with the most influential trust magnate and money changer in the United States, for it gives the lie to the party's promises of reform and places our organization on the same level with the republican party. How can we fight the grand larceny schemes concocted by Morgan and his associates if he and our caucus chairman consult together at the capital? No wonder the corporation papers hail with delight Mr. Gorman's return to power and influence. Public Opinion, in its last issue, cordially commends the selection of Mr. Gorman and says: "Republicans have been the first to admit that the efficiency of the senate will be increased by Mr. Gorman's reappearance as the leader of the opposition."

The republicans would not be likely to admit that the senate would be rendered more efficient by an honest, earnest fight against their policies. The fact that Mr. Gorman supported the ticket in the campaigns of 1896 and 1900 is used to answer objections from Kansas City platform

democrats, and the argument may be satisfactory to those who regard regularity as the only test, but there is an important distinction which must be drawn. A man who, without accepting the platform, supports the ticket can urge his loyalty as a recommendation if he aspires to a position where his views will not misrepresent a majority of the party, but it is absurd to say that because a member of the minority acquiesces in the will of the majority the majority should be willing to put him in a position where he can thwart the will of the majority. Since 1896 Mr. Gorman has never lost an opportunity to reward the men who deserted and helped the enemy. He may as well be recognized as the most potent of all the men who are now trying to reduce the democratic party to servile support of the program arranged by organized wealth. On all economic questions except the tariff he is in agreement with Mr. Cleveland, and on the tariff he is even worse than Cleveland. The statement that he is going to unite the party in an attack on the tariff and the trusts simply means that he favors a sham battle on these issues without prospect or promise of interfering seriously with the republicans.

There are in the senate a number of strong and vigorous representatives of sound democratic principles and they will find it more and more galling to march under the banner of one who stands for the commercialism that is corrupting politics and making money the measure of all things.

The fight begun in 1896 was not so much a fight between gold and silver as a fight between the beneficiaries of class legislation on the one side and the advocates of equal rights on the other, and that fight still continues. It would be fortunate if that fight only manifested itself in the contest between the democratic and republican parties, but we might as well face the fact that to a lesser degree it manifests itself in our party, and there is the more reason why the friends of the Kansas City platform should be on the alert. Instead of retreating, the party must go forward and meet the new questions that are pressing for solution. Until the reform element regains control of the democratic organization in the senate that body will not only not help, but will actually hinder the party's progress.

Unless there has been a complete revolution in the views of several of the democratic senators there will be a protest against Mr. Gorman's leadership and the sooner that protest is made the better for the party.

Czar Grows Democratic.

On another page will be found an extract from a decree recently issued by the czar of Russia. It is an important document and marks an epoch in Russia's growth. The Jews have suffered most from religious intolerance, but all religions will be beneficiaries of the liberty now allowed.

It is a great compliment to the United States that the czar has copied our ideas of local self-government. Here is a victory for our ideas—a peaceful victory—more glorious by far than any victories a colonial policy can bring us. The czar's peace proposition indicated a democratic tendency and this decree shows that he is growing as rapidly as his environment will permit.

MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP

Municipal ownership of public utilities is rapidly growing in favor. A bill has been introduced in the New York legislature providing that at the next general election voters shall have the opportunity to pass upon the question as to public ownership of all municipal transportation lines and public ownership of municipal gas and electric light plants. While it is not generally believed that this bill will pass at the present session, its introduction shows that a considerable sentiment along this line exists in New York and it may be depended upon that sooner or later those who are opposed to the municipal ownership proposition will be required to defend their position before the people.

Carter H. Harrison, mayor of Chicago, has written for the Record-Herald a vigorous and instructive article on the subject of municipal ownership. Mr. Harrison contends that municipal ownership of public utilities contains the only real solution of adequate service to the people. He points out that many of the cities of the old world have adopted this plan and it has proved satisfactory. Mr. Harrison says that while a few years ago this proposition was pronounced impracticable, its correctness from the practical, as well as the theoretical, standpoint cannot now be seriously disputed. He maintains that in this day municipal ownership is opposed only by those who are prejudiced by ownership of stocks, bonds and other securities, and to all others than these municipal ownership presents the only common sense method of handling a vexatious problem.

Referring to the fact that after all other efforts to distract attention from this plan have failed its opponents have resorted to the cry of "anarchy," Mr. Harrison says: "Whenever through some attempt to give fair treatment to the plain citizen, the wallet of the financier is touched, he flaunts the red flag in an endeavor to frighten the innocent-minded."

Mr. Harrison well describes the situation when he says:

"The franchise-holder has gone on enjoying the untrammelled use of the property of the public so long that he seems to have begun to look upon his title as the king or emperor looks upon his right to rule. For generations the guileless public has made a small handful of its fellows the beneficiaries of these franchises, either altogether without reciprocal obligation or with obligations quite incommensurate with the advantages they have enjoyed. Public privileges have been used so long for private gain that apparently to the franchise-holder's way of thinking the title sprang originally from some species of divine origin. The magnates of the street railways, gas plants, telephone plants and other public service utilities seem to claim their franchises through a kindred grace of God. In short, these grants have become the patents of nobility of our moneyed aristocracy.

"For many years the whole public has accepted these conditions without a murmur. The explanations can only be, it seems to me, that these franchises are held by the first citizens of the community. Their general reputation for uprightness and fair dealing has served as a cloak behind which the schemer and promoter have worked secretly and in perfect security. The slightest public clamor has been stilled by the cry that to deny the justice of the claims amounted to inciting to